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ABSTRACT

Based on interviews and document analysis, an evaluation of Year 4 of the Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership (CAECP) assessed its initiatives to help youth and young adults advance their educational and workplace achievements in pursuit of satisfying, productive careers. CAECP improved school-based learning activity objectives by providing career information materials and software; expanding the speaker roster; encouraging use of Individual Academic Career Plans; and promoting credit articulation, curriculum development, academic credit for summer internships, and work-based experience evaluation. CAECP surpassed performance targets for most work-based learning activity objectives, including the following: grade 7 career awareness program; job-shadowing; work-based student and teacher learning experiences; and employer participation. It met many key connecting activity objectives, including developing linkages between institutions and curricula and increasing and improving teachers' professional development opportunities and employer participation. CAECP failed in these important areas: "for credit" student internship and modes of employer engagement. Recommendations include the following: continue to challenge the divide between academic core/college orientations and career and technology tracking; develop a performance management and measurement system; expand educator professional development opportunities; continue employer engagement strategies; expand the student summer internship program; and promote strategies to help recruit skilled instructors. (YLB)

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Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership School-to-Career Grant: An Assessment of Year Four Activities and Prospects

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Acknowledgments

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I. Overview

This report presents results of an independently contracted evaluation of activities and services delivered under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (PL 103-239) by the Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership (the Partnership). School-to-Work activities (known as "School-to-Career" in Texas) are provided largely through 27 existing regional School-to-Career (STC) Partnerships operating in the 28 Local Workforce Development Areas with funds provided by a five-year federal grant administered by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).[1] The Partnership has received five successive one-year grants from TWC to implement School-to-Career activities in Travis County. As part of the Year Five (SFY 2002) grant, TWC required grantees to arrange an independent evaluation of their Year Four (SFY 2001) activities that included direct responses to key research tasks. This report assesses Year Four activities and responds to those key research tasks.

Approach

The evaluator assessed Year Four (September 1, 2000 through August 31, 2001) activities based on interviews and document analysis, continuing the approach taken in earlier evaluations.[2] The evaluation addresses the accomplishments, constraints and prospects of Partnership initiatives designed to help youth and young adults advance their educational and workplace achievements in pursuit of satisfying and productive careers.[3] It does so by probing the experiences and perceptions of employers, educators and other collaborators in the STC effort.[4] These also provide a basis for responding to the key research tasks required by TWC.

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[1] The five-year federal grant awarded to Texas totaled $61.3 million. The Year Four allocation for the Capital Area was $291,302. By comparison, the total Year One allocation was $381,831, the Year Two allocation was $440,000 and the Year Three allocation was $430,094.

[2] O'Shea, Daniel P. and Christopher T. King. March 2000. *Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership School-to-Career Grant: An Assessment of Early Accomplishments, Constraints and Prospects* (Austin: Center for the Study of Human Resources, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas) and O'Shea, Daniel P. February 2001. *Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership School-to-Career Grant: An Assessment of Year Three Activities* (Austin: CAECP).

[3] As in the earlier evaluation, the assessment is limited by the lack of available data, as well as resource and time constraints. The challenges of evaluating School-to-Career initiatives in general are well recognized; see Robert W. Glover and Christopher T. King, "Net Impact Evaluation of School-to-Work: Desirable but Feasible?" in USDOL, *Evaluating the Net Impact of School-to-Work: Proceedings of Roundtable* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997).

[4] The evaluation is limited in scope and does not include an analysis of the impacts of STC participation or its benefits and costs, which along with this present process evaluation would usually comprise essential components of a comprehensive evaluation.

Interviews. Two rounds of informal, but structured in-person and telephone interviews drive the assessment with stakeholders. The first round, conducted between January and February 2001, occurred in the midst of Year Four activities; the second round took place during the months of February and March 2002. (Attachment A contains a list of those interviewed.) Both rounds probed the accomplishments, constraints and related issues with individuals positioned at various points in the regional STC configuration. Interviewees included the Partnership director, the section managers and employees of the Capital Area Training Foundation (CATF, the Partnership's principal contractor), Career and Technology directors, instructors and employers, as well as individuals with associated organizations (e.g., the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce and Education Austin). These interviews were supplemented by site visits to schools and training centers, as well as attendance at STC-related meetings, including industry-sponsored seminars for educators, award events and Industry Sector Steering Committee meetings.

Document Analysis. The evaluator reviewed annual Partnership planning documents, budgets, contracts, management reports and evaluations, as well as education and training materials, brochures and marketing materials, as available. These documents provided a general understanding of the STC initiative and its outcomes in the Austin region. Additionally, they provided a basis for developing interview guides to assess activities and results of the regional STC effort.

Interview Guide. The interview guides featured an array of topical questions designed to elicit experiences from multiple perspectives. Individual discussions drew from appropriate subsections of the guide depending on the interviewee's position within the STC configuration and their professional expertise. Topics targeted for general discussion included:

- Goals and Objectives
- STC Activities
- Resources and Resource Allocations
- Partnerships/Collaborative Configurations
- Recruitment/ Retention in Career Pathways
- Recruitment/ Retention in Industry Sector Steering Committees
- Outcomes

In addition to revisiting these topics, the second-round conversations addressed TWC's requirement that at a minimum this evaluation should explicitly and separately conduct the following six tasks:

1. Provide a narrative that compares the grantee's actual accomplishments to the grant's goals and objectives as listed in the approved grant plans and grant applications.

2. Explain why any of the established goals were not met.

3. List the most significant changes in education/workforce development and economic development in the service delivery area as a result of STC initiatives.

4. Identify the most important impacts or outcomes of these significant changes for students. List sources of data for identified impacts/outcomes.

5. Provide a list of STC strategies that will be sustained when federal STC funds are no longer available. For each strategy, indicate policies, regulations, and/or other arrangements, if any, that will support continued implementation of these STC strategies.

6. Identify financial and/or other resources that will be used to support STC after the grant ends.

Several key topics addressed in the earlier evaluations, including: Strategic Approaches, Systemic Practices and Sustainability provide a foundation for completing the above task and were revisited during the final round of research as well.

Organization of the Report

The remaining four sections of the report present the evaluation results. Section II responds to the six required research tasks, first discussing the accomplishments of the Partnership in attaining its stated annual objectives as found in the planning/reporting matrix that the Partnership submits to TWC (and which also serves as the annual work statement for grant purposes). This is followed by an assessment of constraints to attaining all of the articulated objectives. Next, addresses the influence of STC activities regarding local economic and workforce development, student outcomes, strategies that will be sustained after the termination of federal STC funding and funding sources to support those strategies. Section III revisits persistent constraints that STC continues to confront and offers basic recommendations for those willing to continue voluntary collaboration to improve the livelihood prospects of local youth in the immediate future.[5]

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[5] O'Shea and King (2000), *op. cit.*, offered broader recommendations for actions regarding strategy, system-building, sustainability, and accountability/continuous improvement in the context of changing labor markets and rapid technology developments that remain pertinent to STC in and beyond Central Texas. O'Shea (2001) *op. cit.*, offered more direct-operations related recommendations.

II. Key Research Tasks

Research Task 1. Objectives and Outcomes

Provide a narrative that compares the grantee's actual accomplishments to the grant's goals and objectives as listed in the approved grant plans and grant applications.

As in Year Three, TWC provided Year Four applicants a planning matrix for STC objectives that prospective grantees were required to complete and submit as part of their application.[6] The matrix also serves as a monitoring tool for TWC and a performance management tool for the Partnership. The statewide use of the common format and terminology of the matrix is designed to assist TWC and the 27 local partnerships in systematically planning, monitoring and managing STC.

The end of the Program Year matrix submitted to TWC indicates that the Partnership attained or exceeded almost all of its stated objectives,[7] but failed to do so in a number of important areas, including "for credit" student internship and a few modes of employer engagement. Tables One through Four present a modified version of the TWC reporting matrix covering the period January-June 2001. They indicate the Partnership's key objectives for Year Four, their performance targets and the associated outcomes, both as numbers and percent ratios.

School-Based Learning Activities

The Partnership maintained, expanded and improved many career awareness and school-based learning activities initiated during previous years, including the provision of career information materials and software to participating ISDs, expanding the roster of speakers available for K-12 presentations and encouraging the use of Individual Academic Career Plans (IACPs). The Partnership reached an agreement with all seven local ISDs regarding the completion of parental consent forms for STC participation. Almost all of the eligible ISDs received career aptitude and interest materials from the Partnership; these materials reached nearly 12,000 students. However, the high schools of only three ISDs chose to introduce ACT's Discover software within their career centers.

During Year Four, the roster of available industry guest speakers grew to 250 individuals, well surpassing the targeted number of 150. Local Career and Technology directors

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[6] Originally, the Partnership had established a series of annual objectives in its principal program areas for the five-year federal grant period, which it adjusted annually to reflect the actual and anticipated status of the STC project in Travis County.

[7] Texas Workforce Commission, Texas School-to-Careers Matrix 7:01 H1; January-June 2001.

indicate that these guest speakers are very helpful in terms of career awareness, curriculum development and linking coursework to occupations. The Information Technology Steering Committee, staffed by CATF, also initiated school-based "IT exchange groups" of eight to ten individuals drawn equally from educators and industry to deepen and expand mutually needs, understanding and value. The annual spring regional career fair—with seven ISDs, 2780 students, and 160 employers in attendance—also exceeded expectations. The fair exposes students to career options and provides a venue for initiating summer internship and job contacts.

Key school-based activities included promoting credit articulation, curriculum development, academic credit for summer internships, and evaluation procedures for quality work-based experiences. During Year Four, the Partnership, continued working with Capital Area Tech Prep Consortium (CATPC), to secure articulation agreements between local colleges, particularly in the areas of software/computer sciences and health sciences. The Partnership also collaborated with other regional entities to provide summer educator internships and industry-led workshops within which participants were required to develop lesson plans for their classrooms based on the workplace learning experiences. (The Partnership directly funded six of educator internships and provided indirect support for others among the 55 placements.)

Table One.
Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership
Year Four Performance Objectives and Outcomes.
School-Based Learning Activities

Objective	Activity Description	Performance Target	Performance Achievement	Performance Ratio
Parental Consent for Substantive STC Participation	• Districts assure Partnership that parental consent forms will be completed and sent to Partnership.	7 ISDs	7 ISDs	100 %
Elementary School Career Awareness	• CATF maintains a roster of 150 industry speakers for K-12 classes.	150 Speakers	250 Speakers	167 %
7th Grade and Up Career Awareness	• CATF organizes regional career fair for students, educators and employers.	5 ISDs 2000 Students 100 Employers	7 ISDs 2780 Students 160 Employers	140 % 139 % 160 %

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Provision of Career Interest and Aptitude Materials	• Partnership provides ACT's Explore, Viesa, Plan and Discover materials to participating ISDs.	7 ISDs 4000 Students	6 ISDs 11618 Students	86 % 290 %
Provision of Career Exploration Software	• Partnership continues to provide ACT's Discover software high school career centers of participating ISDs.	7 ISDs	3 ISDs	43 %
Integration of Career Awareness with Secondary and Postsecondary Curricula	• Partnership and collaborators (CATPC, ACC, ISDs, ARIES) develop integrate curriculum w/industry validation in software/computer science prepared for articulation agreement process.	4 ISDs	4 ISDs	100 %
Integration of Career Awareness with Secondary and Postsecondary Curricula	• Extend Individual Academic Career Plans to responsive ISDs. Provide consulting assistance to those ISDs who request help on IACP implementation.	4 ISDs	5 ISDs	125 %
Linking Academic and Vocational Curricula	• Provide summer internships with academic credit for students in career pathways.	3 ISDs 100 Students	3 ISDs 35 students	100 % 35 %
Implementing Student Skill Evaluations (Academic and Occupational)	• In addition to IACPs, summer student internships have formal evaluation of workplace knowledge and gaps	200 Students	291 Students	146 %

Source: Texas Workforce Commission. Texas School-to-Careers Matrix 7:01 H1; January-June 2001.

The Partnership and its principal subcontractor, CATF, were less successful at providing for-credit summer internships for high school students. Only 35 students, well below the targeted 100, enrolled in for-credit internships. On the other hand, the Partnership exceeded its target regarding student skill evaluations. Nearly 300 students had a post-employment evaluation of their workplace knowledge.

Work-Based Learning Activities

Key Work-Based Learning Activity objectives for Year Four broadly fall under three categories:

1. Activities designed to facilitate work place visits/industry tours for individual and groups of students and educators, some of which included parents as well;

2. Activities designed to provide quality summer internships and job placements for students and educators; and

3. Activities designed to expand and intensify employer and educator engagement.

The primary strategy to accomplish these objectives was to increase employer involvement in the ISCs and CATF's High Tech Educators Network (HTEN) that was introduced in the fall 2000.[8] The annual career fair has proven to be an effective event for facilitating contact between students, employers and educators, as well.

As Table Two indicates, the Partnership through CATF surpassed performance targets for most objectives. Students in Austin ISD participated in "Getting Down to Business" as part of the IACP bridge program. The project was a collaboration between the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, Capital Area Training Foundation, Junior Achievement, Austin Partners in Education and the CAECP to create a career awareness program for 7th grade students in AISD. The classroom portion of the program reached 5000 students with 135 volunteers, in a total of 192 classes. The program reached 1350 students who participated in the "Ground Hog Day" job-shadowing event with 39 companies participating, and which was open beyond Austin ISD. At least 350 students participated in "ACE Nights" at semiconductor production facilities and other events, e.g., work site fish fries sponsored by firms in the automotive technology cluster. The reporting matrix also indicates that 56 educators—16 more than anticipated—participated in work site visits, including the summer institutes sponsored by Samsung and AMD.

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[8] HTEN's goal is to create opportunities for deepening the use of technology in the classroom and to stimulate curriculum development that integrates applied problem-solving using industry-based examples. Ultimately, it is presumed that these classroom approaches will enhance science and math skills of students, enabling them to pursue technology-related careers and compete more successfully in an information-based economy. See O'Shea, Dan. 2001. *High Tech Educator Network Evaluation.* (Austin: CATF).

In fact, the number of work site visits and work-based learning experiences for educators in the Austin area was much higher. HTEN helped to initiate and facilitate a series of nine industry-led seminars for educators between September and May 2001. Attendance rosters indicate that at least 111 individuals participated in these events and that each individual attended two events on average. High tech firms or industry clusters supported these seminars which occurred approximately once per month in the early evening. Each dealt with a specific aspect of the advanced technology sector's status and prospects regarding enhanced linkages with education. Hosts included Apple, IBM, Dell, Hire.com, Knowbility.com, 4empower.com, and other members of the regional advance technology sector.[9] In addition, CATF in collaboration with regional partners facilitated 55 summer educator internships.[10]

CATF also estimated that the ISCs were associated with 2300 student summer job placements. Unfortunately, the reported data suggests that the quality of the work-based learning experiences did not meet expectations. Only 260 of a targeted 400 student placements appear to have had a solid workplan, mentoring and an evaluation component or recognized rotation schedule. Only 35 for credit internships provided work-related counseling and 75 of a targeted 150 placements had a verifiable mentoring component.

The Partnership and CATF report greater success with employer engagement and ISD commitment to STC activities. The Partnership and CATF conscientiously attempt to provide a continuum of employer participation opportunities. Employers are regularly recruited to volunteer as speakers, serve as job shadow host, sponsor teacher and student industry visits, become a career fair exhibitor, provide internships and join the ISCs. CATF industry liaisons recruited some 500 employers to participate in STC activities within the 7 industry clusters, a number that likely will increase. Based on employer participation in the Greater Austin@Work Summit in June 2001, CATF and area employers decided to increase the number of ISCs from 7 to 12 during the following year.

The Partnership also met expectations regarding employer involvement in work site visits for individual educators (2 employers) and exceeded expectations regarding employers with work-based learning opportunities (100 employers) by 100 percent. The Partnership slightly surpassed the targeted number of employers who provided work-based mentoring for students and achieved 90 percent attainment rates for employers associated with work-based counseling for creditable internships and work-based learning opportunities for secondary cooperative education teachers. CATF recruited cooperative education

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[9] O'Shea, *ibid.*

[10] The HTEN activities made use of these extensive networks and partnerships developed in recent years under publicly-funded School-to-Career and Tech Prep programs in Central Texas and the private sector-based Greater Capital Area Chamber of Commerce. Primary public partners include the Capital Area Education and Career Partnership (CAECP), the Rural Capital Area School-to-Career Partnership (RCSTCP), the Capital Area Tech Prep Consortium, the Rural Capital Area Workforce Development Board, and the City of Austin Workforce Development Coordinators Office, as well as almost all of the Independent School Districts in central Texas.

teachers to participate in industry tours, ISC meetings and the career fair to provide them better access to employers.

ISD targeted performance was met or surpassed regarding all but a few objectives. The Partnership concluded consent agreements with all eligible ISDs. Student group and educator work site visits and work-based mentoring targets were attained. On the down side according to the report, only two of the targeted three ISDs participated in the individual student work site visits and job shadowing activities.

Table Two.
Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership
Year Four Performance Objectives and Outcomes:
Work-Based Learning Activities

Objective	Activity Description	Performance Target	Performance Achievement	Performance Ratio
Parental Consent for Substantive STC Participation	• Districts assure Partnership that parental consent forms will be completed and sent to Partnership.	7 ISDs	7 ISDs	100 %
Work Site Visits/ Groups of Students	• CATF continues "Getting Down to Business" for eighth grade students in learning paths.	1 ISD 900 Students	1 ISD 1320 students	100 % 147 %
Work Site Visits/ Individual Students	• CATF arranges work site visit by students and parents to employers.	3 ISDs 200 students	2 ISDs 350 students	67 % 175 %
Work Site Visits/Individual Educators	• Summer Institutes (3 day) for educators at Samsung and AMD.	3 ISDs 40 Educators 2 Employers	6 ISDs 56 Educators 2 Employers	200 % 140 % 100 %
Worksite Job-Shadowing/Individual Students	• CATF supports "Ground Hog Day" job-shadowing.	3 ISDs 200 Students	2 ISDs 1350 Students	67 % 675 %

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Quality Work-Based Learning Experiences/ Student Internships	• CATF works w/ ISDs and employers to provide internships and industry rotations.	400 Students	260 Students	65 %
Quality Work-Based Learning Experiences/ Jobs for Secondary Cooperative Education Teachers	• CATF assists coop teachers to identify employers with career-related jobs.	50 Employers	45 Employers	90 %
Identify and Market Work-Based Learning Opportunities	• CATF serves 7 industry clusters with which staff work to identify work-based learning experiences.	400 Students 50 Employers	2300 Students 100 Employers	575 % 200 %
Provision of Work-Based Counseling	• CATF will include work-based counseling in its "for credit" internships.	100 Students 30 Employers	35 Students 27 Employers	35 % 90 %
Provision of Work-Based Mentoring	• CATF includes mentoring as a key component of summer internships.	3 ISDs 150 Students 30 Employers	4 ISDs 75 Students 31 Employers	133 % 50 % 103 %
Provision of Job Rotation Opportunities	• CATF continues job rotations as a key component of the hospitality and health sciences career pathways	400 Students	260 Students	65 %
Providing Employers a Continuum of Participation Options	• CATF industry liaisons provide range of participation options in 7 industries.	300 Employers	500 Employers	167 %

Source: Texas Workforce Commission. Texas School-to-Careers Matrix 7:01 H1; January-June 2001.

Connecting Activities

Key Connecting Activity objectives for Year Four in the reporting matrix included strengthening ties with and building upon the success of the CATPC; developing and deepening linkages between institutions and curricula; increasing and improving professional development opportunities for teachers; increasing employer participation in ISCs; and developing and strengthening a marketing strategy. Table Three indicates that the Partnership met most of these objectives, but experienced some slippage regarding the involvement of employers involved with ARIES Alliance and postsecondary institutions and employers in the Greater Austin @ Work Summit and follow-up meetings.

Since its inception the Partnership has worked closely with the Tech Prep consortium and it continues to do so regularly, particularly to complete articulation procedures between career pathway curricula and postsecondary accreditation. The Partnership and CATPC realized the participation of seven employers, rather than the targeted ten, in the integrated curriculum development project led by ARIES and sponsored by a National Science Foundation grant. ARIES planned to pilot the curriculum in the Round Rock, Austin and Georgetown ISDs beginning in the fall 2001. Reportedly, seven local ISDs are part of the curriculum development team and the project works with numerous PSIs, including Texas A&M, The University of Texas, Austin Community College, Southwest Texas State University and St. Edward's University. Only three of the targeted four ISDs in Travis collaborated in other local software/computer sciences curricula articulation efforts.

In other areas, a few that have already been mentioned, the Partnership attained its targeted objectives. The Partnership and CATF, in collaboration with Austin Partners in Education, which coordinates the Adopt-a-School program and is part of the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, exceeded its objectives and identified 2300 mentors for career pathway students. Fifty-six educators representing six ISDs participated in intensive professional development workshops at area semiconductor plants. As mentioned above, this likely undercounts the number of educators who participated in professional development activities. CATF's Health Industry Steering Committee also conducted a professional development workshop. ISC employer participation in the ISCs expanded to 500 employers in the seven industry clusters.

The Partnership and CATF also actively marketed STC activities and participatory benefits. The career fair and the Summit received substantial media coverage. Brochures introducing career concentrations were produced to distribute to counselors, students and parents in the fall 2001. The Partnership, in collaboration with the Rural Capital Workforce Development Board (RCAWDB), the Capital Area Workforce Development Board (CAWDB), CATF, CATPC and Austin Community College sponsored a series of six four-page career-oriented inserts in *Austin American Statesman*, which also subsidized the effort. Such leadership in this venture encouraged employers industry sector groups (Automotive Tech, Semiconductor and Health Care) and the AFL-CIO Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee to assume the $10,000 cost for subsequent issues. . These inserts, which described career preparation and occupational options in

industry sectors, reached a broad audience of students, parents and employers. Thousands of additional copies of these have been made available to instructors and counselors for STC activities.

Table Three.
Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership
Year Four Performance Objectives and Outcomes:
Connecting Activities

Objective	Activity Description	Performance Target	Performance Achievement	Performance Ratio
Building Upon Existing Tech Prep Initiatives	• The Partnership and CATPC combine TEKS, WECM and software industry input to prepare integrated curriculum in Software/Computer Sciences ready for articulation agreement processing.	3 ISDs 2 PSIs* 10 Employers	3 ISDs 3PSIs 7 Employers	100 % 150 % 70 %
Supporting Adopt-a-School Initiative	• The Partnership works with Austin Partners in Education to maintain a roster of school mentors who help students.	2000 Students	2300 Students	115 %
Supporting Linkages between Institutions and Curricula/ Secondary to Postsecondary.	• The Partnership prepared the Software/Computer Sciences curricula for articulation.	4 ISDs 1 PSI	3 ISDs 1 PSI	75 % 100 %
Provision of Professional Development Opportunities for Teachers	• The Partnership/ CATF supports three professional development sessions at semiconductor companies for math, science and technology teachers.	6 ISDs 40 Educators 3 Employers	6 ISDs 56 Educators 2 Employers	100 % 140 % 67 %

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Increase Employer Participation in Industry Steering Committees.	• ISCs are operational in High Tech, Construction, Semiconductor, Health Care, Criminal Justice, Consumer Services and Automotive Technology.	350 Employers 7 Industries	500 Employers 7 Industries	143 % 100 %
Implementation of Communication and Information Strategies/ Radio and TV Spots	• CATF secured substantial radio and TV coverage for region wide career fair.	5 ISDs 2000 Students 100 Employers	5 ISDs 2500 Students 160 Employers	100 % 125 % 160 %
Implementation of Communication and Information Strategies/ Brochures, Pamphlets, Posters	• Partnership plans to print brochures on at least nine career concentrations and distribute them to ISDs for use by counselors, parents and students in selecting courses for the 2001-2 school year.	5 ISDs 20,000 Brochures	5 ISDs 25,000 Brochures	100 % 125 %
Implementation of Communication and Information Strategies/ Other	• Partnership and CATF will repeat Greater Austin@Work Summit as a means of gaining employer, public sector, educator, student and community recognition of the value of STC activities.	5 ISDs 5 PSIs 100 Employers	3 ISDs 4 PSIs 71 Employers	60 % 80 % 71 %

Source: Texas Workforce Commission. Texas School-to-Careers Matrix 7:01 H1; January-June 2001.
*PSIs refers to Postsecondary Institutions.

Coordination and Collaboration

The Partnership's effectiveness in coordinating resources and initiatives for STC activities in central Texas is perhaps its most notable area of success. As a manager at CATF stated, the Partnership, particularly because of the leadership and facilitator skills of its volunteer Director, provides the thread that weaves together the broad tapestry of STC efforts in the Austin area. CAECP has allocated its scarce resources to provide materials and services to schools and ISDs that promote awareness of the importance of and enhance the quality of STC activities. For example, its introduction of "If I Had a Hammer" projects for fifth grade students has enhanced awareness of the contribution of applied learning experiences among elementary educators, a contribution most strongly articulated by Career and Technology Education Directors at Manor and DeValle ISDs. The Partnership's direct allocation of resources also provided stipends that enable Travis County educators to participate in summer internships and paid educators to serve as Summer Internship Academic Supervisors for summer student internships. Both of these infusions of resources facilitated a regional and systemic approach to educator and student internships. When not directly providing the financial "glue" for projects, the Partnership is an active coach helping to direct activities from the sidelines.

Table Four reveals several other successful collaborations in which the Partnership continued to participate in Year Four. In each of the project-related objectives contained in the matrix, the Partnership achieved or surpassed the performance target.

In the fall 2000, the CAECP Board and the Capital Area Workforce Development Board voted to merge the Board's Youth Council and the CAECP. Four Youth Council members joined the CAECP Board to form the Youth Activities Committee which serves as the WIA Youth Advisory Committee, a subcommittee of the Board which is required by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The Committee promises to pursue a broad youth development agenda that maximizes local public and private resources for education and training activities in Travis County. WIA resources can strengthen STC activities. The conformance of interest is exhibited by the WIA-funded Youth Employment Project in which 300 students are being served.

The Youth Employment Project (YEP) helps at-risk and out-of-school youth complete their education and prepare for the workforce. Service delivery is provided through the collaborative efforts of CATF, Goodwill Industries, American Youth Works, Communities-in-Schools and the Urban League. CATF helps participants transition into STC activities. Major support comes from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I Youth funds administered by the CAWDB.

The Partnership and CATF have also provided direct and indirect support for the Community Technology and Training Center (CTTC), formerly known as Telecommunity Partnership Initiative at Travis and Reagan High Schools in the Austin ISD. The Centers provide access to computer training for students, out-of-school youth and local families, many of whom are low-income. Classes range from the introduction to the keyboard to advanced programming. The Partnership reports that 250 students received assistance at the CTTCs in Year Four, but the community reach of the Centers

goes well beyond this. Hundreds of individuals have received training at the CTTC that has introduced them to advanced technologies and helped them with their employment prospects. CATF has partnered with representatives from the schools, the Austin ISD, the City of Austin, local businesses and community members in this project.

The CATF continues to operate the Gateway Construction program at Austin Community College; the Partnership helped to plan and coordinate, as well as to fund the project's start-up. Gateway provides a five-week curriculum that introduces participants to the skill sets of occupations in the building trades. The project serves primarily incarcerated youth and unemployed adults with barriers to work. The transitional pre-employment and job-readiness services at Gateway prepare participants for entry-level jobs in the building trades and apprenticeship programs. CATF staff and ACC instructors conduct nine classes annually and, as Table Four indicates, there were 90 graduates last year. Gateway reportedly has an 83-85 percent job placement rate among graduates. CATF coordinates the project, which draws cash and in-kind support from the city, school district, business and federal grants. Most of the current funding now comes from Travis County and the City of Austin which recognize Gateway as a wise investment in individual opportunity and antidote for recidivism.

The Partnership achieved the level of employer participation in the Semiconductor Executive Council and its project area, Destination Digital. It failed to attain its performance target regarding employer participation in the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber is a major supporter of CATF's school-to-career activities and the Executive Director of the CATF also serves as the Chamber's Vice-President for education and workforce development. That the Chamber failed to expand its membership to 3000 employers, recruiting or retaining only 2200, has not however dampened the level of commitment from the Chamber. Nor is this an unacceptable participation rate, given the local slow down in the local economy and the number of competing business associations.

In addition to these objectives specified in the reporting matrix, the Partnership has worked to advance several other aspects of STC. Since its inception, the Partnership has advocated increased enrollment in and availability of Career Pathways in the local schools, promoted the use of Individual Academic Career Plans (IACP) to foster linkages between education and careers, worked to reduce tensions between academic and vocational education tracks, increase math and science skills and knowledge in K-12, and investigated creative means for instructor recruitment and retention. CAECP has provided direct grants to ISDs to increase capacity for pre-advance placement (AP) courses at the elementary level and AP at the secondary level. It has also been consistently concerned with the sustainability of the STC efforts after the grant expires, continuous improvement of activities and services, accountability for outcomes and the data to support such measurement. The Partnership's relative success in these various undertakings can only be appreciated as a function of conditions and events over which it may have some influence, but little control.

Table Four.
Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership
Year Four Performance Objectives and Outcomes:
Coordination/Collaboration with Other Entities

Objective	Activity Description	Performance Target	Performance Achievement	Performance Ratio
Link with Public Funded Entities and Resources/Local Workforce Development Board	• The Partnership will participate in WIA Youth Advisory Group of the Capital Area LWDB so the WIA youth can benefit from CATF and STC activities..	50 Students	300 Students	600 %
Link with Public Funded Entities and Resources/City and County Government	• The Partnership and CATF work with city/county government and other resources at the Community Technology and Training Centers (formerly Telecommunity Partnership Initiative) at local high schools.	200 Students	250 Students	125 %
Link with Public Funded Entities and Resources/City and County Government	• The Partnership and CATF work with city/county government, Austin Community College and other resources at the Construction Gateway Project, which benefits many previously, incarcerated youth.	85 Students	90 Students	106 %

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Link with Private Funded Entities and Resources/Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce	• The Partnership/ CATF will continue to integrate the STC activities of the GACoC with other STC work. The Executive Director of the CATF also serves as a Vice-President of the Chamber, which provides significant funding for STC activities.	3000 Employers	2200 Employers	73 %
Link with Private Funded Entities and Resources/Industry Organizations	• CATF will continue to provide staff support for the Semiconductor Executive Council and the expansion of the Accelerated Careers in Electronics initiative under the rubric of the Destination Digital activities..	6 Employers	6 Employers	100 %
Link with Private Funded Entities and Resources/Labor and Apprenticeship	• Construction Gateway participants get pre-apprenticeship credit toward craft and industry apprenticeship training programs.	1 PSI 85 Students	1 PSI 90 Students	100 % 106 %

Source: Texas Workforce Commission. Texas School-to-Careers Matrix 7:01 H1; January-June 2001.

Research Task Two: Goal Attainment

Explain why any of the established goals were not met.

The preceding section generally indicates that the Partnership's activities have supported its mission to "provide students with a foundation of academic/career knowledge and skills" and to forge "active partnerships among education, business, industry, labor, government and community organizations" to achieve its objectives.[11] It also indicates that the Partnership was largely successful at achieving its objectives as measured by the targeted performance standards linked to the objectives. In several instances, however, the Partnership and CATF, its principal contractor, appear to have fallen short of targets regarding the participation rates of ISDs, PSIs, students, and employers.

Before discussing these apparent shortcomings, two considerations deserve mention. First, as suggested in the previous section, the results reported in the matrix may under-represent the actual levels of participation. The Partnership provided the results that it could verify for Travis County only; the effect of the Partnership's coordination and collaboration efforts spills over to regional students, employers and educators. CATF spokespersons regularly report higher rates of participation in several activities than the Partnership reports and, although some of this is anecdotal, these participation results are in part attributable to the Partnership.

Second, it is important to keep in mind the relationship between these targets and outcomes or real results. From a performance management and accountability perspective, these participation rates are simply process measures that do not accurately address substantive outcomes. The Partnership's director and CATF managers have consistently advocated for better data collection and management procedures to begin measuring real outcomes. True outcomes would measure the link between activities and results from the perspectives of students, educators, employers and society:

- For students, measures might assess the relationship between STC activities and outcomes such as student skills and knowledge acquisition, retention, advancement, graduation, postsecondary continuity and employment/career experiences.

- For educators, they might assess improved pedagogy such as the results of work-based experiences on professional development, curriculum development and teaching effectiveness.

- For employers they might assess the effects of STC activities on increased productivity, profitability, employment retention and other outcomes that measure employer benefits.

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[11] Article I of the *Travis County School-To-Work Partnership By-Laws* (August 1997).

Such measures would truly indicate whether school-to-career is successfully meeting its societal goals of improving the livelihood prospects of youth, education reform, workforce development and economic development. At the present time, neither the Austin Partnership nor other STC efforts in the state or nation are prepared to implement such measures. Systemic data collection capacity does not yet exists across fragmented and decentralized stakeholders that comprise STC efforts.

As reported earlier, the Partnership can do little about the fragmentation of administrative oversight and categorical funding for workforce, education and economic development among state and federal agencies or changes in political regimes at the state or national level and other large scale environmental influences. Recall that the Partnership operates primarily in a planning and coordination mode with a volunteer Director and a part-time Administrative Assistant. Its capacity for progress depends to a large extent on the will and capacity of the much more powerful and resourceful local ISDs and schools, employers and public education and training resources.

Independent School Districts

ISD participation did not achieve the anticipated level for several objectives, including:

- Provision of Career Interest and Aptitude Materials: 6 of 7 targeted ISDs
- Provision of Career Exploration Software: 3 of 7 targeted ISDs
- Work Site Visits/Individual Students: 2 of 3 targeted ISDs
- Work Site Job Shadowing: 2 of 3 targeted ISDs
- Supporting Linkages between Curricula/Secondary to Postsecondary: 3 of 4 targeted ISDs
- Implementation of Communication Strategies/Other: 3 of 5 targeted ISDs

According to several sources, the largest constraint to ISD participation is financial; school finance reform in Texas, known as "Robin Hood", has undermined local capacity, particularly at Austin ISD, to fully commit to and realize the benefits of STC.

Failure to attain these and other objectives also reflects in part the voluntary nature of Texas STC: ISD levels of commitment will fluctuate over time and across activities. Several factors contribute to uneven or intermittent ISD participation including local interest in or need for the activity, administrator or educator turnover and limitations on staff time and resources. For example, one counselor declined the Discover software, stating that it was not student-user friendly and required too much instructor assistance and time. Other reasons for fluctuating ISD participation identified in earlier reports

remain evident as well, such as tensions between academic and vocational education within ISDs, instructor recruitment and retention and, in a few instances, ISD reluctance to adopt CATF's industry-led model. These external conditions are beyond the direct control of the Partnership.

At least two of the shortfalls— Career Interest/Aptitude Materials and Career Exploration Software—are resource driven. As part of its sustainability strategy, the Partnership incrementally shifted costs to ISDs. During Years One through Three the Partnership absorbed all costs of these materials. During Year Four, ISDs was asked to pay one/third of the costs (and this has increased to two-thirds in Year Five). Attrition resulted. In Year Three, all 7 eligible ISDs accepted the Partnership's offer to provide Career Interest and Aptitude Material and 6 accepted the Provision of Career Exploration Software; participation in both of these activities dropped to 6 ISDs and 3 ISDs, respectively, in Year Four.[12] The overriding positive outcome is that all seven local ISDs participated to some degree in STC activities during Year Four; ISDs have stayed at the table, but may refuse some of the dishes.

Postsecondary Institutions

Postsecondary institutions participated at expected levels for all objectives except:

- Implementation of Communication and Information Strategies/Other: 4 of 5 targeted PSIs

This is basically irrelevant. One postsecondary institution could not participate in Greater Austin@Work Summit follow-up meetings. Overall, local PSIs are active in STC activities and representatives from Houston-Tillotson College, the University of Texas at Austin, Austin Community College and St. Edward's University sit on the Partnership's Board. The Automotive Technology ISC also works closely with St. Phillip's College in San Antonio and Texas State Technical College in Waco; several other colleges and universities participate in the annual career fairs.

Students

Student participation in STC activities failed to meet the anticipated levels related to summer internships and quality work-based learning experiences. Specifically, student participation did not meet the targeted performance in:

- Linking Academic and Vocational Criteria/For Credit Interns: 35 of 100 targeted students

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[12] O'Shea (2001), *op. cit.*

- Quality Work-Based Learning Experience/Summer Interns: 260 of 400 targeted students
- Provision of Work-Based Counseling: 35 of 100 targeted students
- Provision of Work-Based Mentoring: 75 of 150 targeted students
- Provision of Job Rotation Opportunities: 260 of 400 targeted students

Several spokespersons indicated that the single greatest factor to low student participation in high quality summer internships was the slowdown in the local economy. Employers were simply not able to hire youth at previous rates while they were laying off regular employees.

Educators and STC collaborators have also offered several other reasons to explain apparent low number of students who received quality job placements and internships. These include weak student interest in for credit placement, the challenges of aligning placements with career concentrations, lackluster marketing of for-credit internships, the labor intensity and costs associated with providing academic credit for a workforce experience and lack of interest on the part of participating ISDs. A spokesperson for the largest school district in Travis County bluntly stated that the ISD's School-to-Career office simply lacked the staff and resources to provide adequate monitoring of credit-worthy placements.

The Year Three report identified the "creeping blur" between summer internships and job placements, and much of this persists. The Partnership, CATF and the Summer Internship Academic Supervisors failed to adequately collect data regarding the distribution between for-credit internships, regular internships and summer jobs within student work-based learning experiences.[13] This remains an unresolved issue to date in central Texas regarding best practices for project-based learning experiences in local STC efforts. Moreover, as stated earlier, there are inconsistencies between what the Partnership reported as the number of students in quality work-based learning experiences and the number of such placements that CATF spokespersons suggest that there actually were.

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[13] The Partnership developed criteria for quality internships that included pre-requisite course-work, enrollment in a career concentration, parental approval, a summer learning plan, mentorship and a post-experience evaluation. In Year Three, the Partnership, CATF, TEA and cooperative ISDs negotiated and implemented procedures for securing academic credit for 97 such internships. O'Shea (2001), *op. cit.*

Employers

Engaging employers in STC activities is a principal function of the ISCs staffed by CATF and overall the intermediary functions of industry cluster approach have been vary successful within and across sectors.[14] The Year Four reporting matrix indicates that employer participation fell short of expectations for a few objectives, namely:

- Quality Work-Based Learning Experiences/Jobs for Secondary Cooperative Education Teachers: 45 of 50 targeted employers
- Provision of Work-Based Counseling/ For Credit Interns: 27 of 30 targeted employers
- Building upon Existing Tech Prep Initiatives: 7 of 10 targeted employers
- Provision of Professional Development Opportunities: 2 of 3 targeted employers
- Implementation of Communication Strategies/ Other: 71 of 100 targeted employers
- Link with Private Funded Entities and Resources/Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce: 2200 of 3000 targeted employers

A major contributor to declining employer engagement was the sharp downturn in the Austin area advanced technology sector and the ripple effect this had on the local economy. Employer participation had in part been driven by tight labor markets and the perceived value of investing in the future workforce by investing in STC activities. Summer educator and student internships were not as available as in earlier years, a condition that has carried over to Year Five. For example, Samsung Corporation dismantled the entire human resource section that administered the three-day professional development workshop for educators. Another firm declined to follow through with summer educator workshops because of economic conditions.

Despite these numeric indicators, a core level of private sector commitment to STC persists in the central Texas area across industry sectors. The Information Technology ISC, the High Tech Manufacturing ISC and the Semiconductor Executive Council have retained core support. Presently, the SEC is almost totally funded by employer contributions. AMD plans to continue its summer workshops and Dell Computer is reportedly very satisfied with the Summer Educator Internships, so much so that it plans to pay the entire stipend for participants in 2002. Additionally, the depth of commitment

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[14] The success of the CATF is most recently recognized in Miller, Marc S. May 2001. *Finding Common Ground: Local Intermediaries and National Industry Associations*. Issue Brief (Boston: Jobs for the Future: School-to-Work Intermediary Project). On March 3, 2002, the National Association of Workforce Boards awarded the Grand Prize Theodore E. Small Workforce Partnership Award to the Health Industry Steering Committee.

in the Automotive Technology and Health Care ISC, two industries relatively insulated from the slowdown, has been consistent.

Research Task Three: Significant Changes in the Local Environment

List the most significant changes in education/workforce development and economic development in the service delivery area as a result of STC initiatives.

An equally important consideration is the effect changes in the education, workforce and economic context had on school-to-career locally. The answer: serious and troublesome. As mentioned earlier, the economic slowdown and the crisis of school finance challenge student and educator placements, employer engagement and ISD capacity.

Nevertheless, there is general agreement among collaborators that the most significant changes in education, workforce development and economic development in the service delivery area as a result of STC initiatives are:

- Increased awareness among students, educators, employers and public sector entities of the important relationship between education, workforce and economic development.

- Increased participation and improving quality in all the major STC program areas (School-based Learning Activities/Career Awareness, Work-based Learning Activities and Connecting Activities) which contribute to education reform, emergent workforce development and economic prosperity.

- Viable Industry Steering Committees (ISCs) staffed by CATF that are increasingly self-sufficient and function as respected intermediaries that link employers and educators.

- Increased opportunities for students and instructors to obtain workplace experiences that enhance skills and knowledge and complement classroom experiences.

- More opportunities for employers to share their experiences and insights with students and educators in the classroom and, at the same time, develop an appreciation of the challenges and opportunities for improving curriculum and learning.

- Recognition among educators, employers and local leaders of the need to improve math, science and technical skills among local youth so that they may more successfully participate in the knowledge economy and a commitment to do so.

A local automobile dealer, Mazda South, serves as a good example of the perceived benefits of closer links between education and economy. Seven of the 17 technicians employed by Mazda South are graduates of the Automotive Technology Career Concentration. Reportedly, these graduates have a 95% customer satisfaction rate (higher than the firm average) and a nearly zero turnover rate. They also are more productive and contribute to the "bottom line"; labor costs as a percentage of billing are substantially lower for these graduates than the rest of the staff. Outcomes such as these keep employers interested in STC.[15]

Research Task Four: Student Outcomes

Identify the most important impacts or outcomes of these significant changes for students. List sources of data for identified impacts/outcomes.

Unfortunately, reliable administrative and other data sources for student outcomes concerning improvements in educational performance, workforce experiences and their contribution to local economic development are not available. As the preceding tables and earlier assessments reveal, the Partnership has been successful over the years at increasing participation, employer/student engagement and the quality of the student activities and services that it supports.[16] Looking across the categorical career awareness, school-based learning, work-based learning and connecting activities, it is probable that the Partnership has influenced student outcomes by:

- Increasing career awareness in K-12 learning activities
- Supporting pre-AP and AP curriculum and instructor professional development
- Working to increase and develop career concentrations in the high schools
- Promoting student preparation, recruitment and enrollment in career concentrations
- Providing opportunities for educators, especially through teacher internships and workshops, to develop lesson plans and curriculum improvements that incorporate work-based exercises and applied learning opportunities into the classroom setting
- Improving the marketing of STC activities to students, educators, employers, parents and the community

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[15] *CAECP Quarterly Narrative Report*, April 1, 2001 to June 30, 2001.

[16] This and earlier assessments of student outcomes are based on CAECP documentation (e.g., Quarterly and Semi-Annual Reports, Grant Applications, etc.) and field interview results.

- Increasing work site tours, job shadowing opportunities, internships and job placements available to students
- Expanding the number of employers involved in Industry Steering Committees and the number of ISCs in which employers may participate
- Establishing student/industry mentor partnerships

These successful process outcomes may be associated with students results in education (knowledge acquisition, reduced dropout rates, grade advancement, graduation, postsecondary continuity, etc.) and employment/career experiences (occupation, wages, career advancement, etc).

Research Task Five: Sustainability Strategies

Provide a list of STC strategies that will be sustained when federal STC funds are no longer available. For each strategy indicate policies, regulations, and/or other arrangements, if any, that will support continued implementation of these STC strategies.

The Partnership has been acutely aware of the necessity for pursuing sustainability strategies since its inception. After the grant expires, the Partnership has identified three principal vehicles for continuing STC activities: CATF, local ISDs and the WIA Title I Youth Advisory Committee and programs.

The CATF will continue its successful intermediary work and support for an array of events and functions. In support of sustainability, CATF has pursued funds diversification and self-supporting activities. CATF currently has a budget of nearly $1,000,000 drawn from city, county, state, federal and private sector funding sources; the Partnership's CATF contract is $75,000. Clearly, CATF is well positioned and dedicated to continuing its important STC activities. Moreover, CATF intends to concentrate efforts in its most dynamic ISCs and their activities for students and educators as a basis for tracking outcomes, the idea being that verified result builds sustainable support.

The Youth Activities Committee, which includes the Partnership's Director and key Board members, serves as the WIA Youth Advisory Committee. This subcommittee of the Capital Area Workforce Development Board, as required by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998, can pursue a youth development agenda that maximizes local public and private resources for the education and training of the emergent workforce in Travis County. The Committee can help coordinate and direct local youth services system policies, planning and programs. The Committee will also recommend contract

providers for WIA Title I Youth programs. The WIA-funded YEP effort has already formed a basis for improving capacity for youth services delivery among several entities, including CATF, Goodwill Industries, American Youth Works, Communities-in-Schools and the Urban League.

Local ISDs that are conceptually and practically committed to improving STC activities can assume greater responsibility for STC activities. The School-to-Career and Career and Technology Education Directors and staff at central Texas ISDs ostensibly embrace STC features, but do so to widely varying degrees. The Partnership's strategy has consistently been to provide available activities and services to interested and willing schools and ISDs with the intent that the value of the STC options will entice schools and ISDs to incrementally absorb more responsibility, both operational and fiscal. ISDs are likely to need continuous external support for many activities; a basis for this support exists within CATF, the ISCs, CATPC, private school foundations, CAWDB and other sources.

Research Task Six: Sustainability Resources

Identify financial and/or other resources that will be used to support STC after the grant ends.

The sustainability of STC activities depends on obtaining and maintaining resource commitments for STC activities from school districts, employers, government funding streams, foundations and other sources to replace funds that will no longer be available when the federal STC grant expires in September 2002. The Year Five Planning Matrix identifies several strategies that the Partnership is pursuing to secure support after the termination of federal funding, including:[17]

- Securing commitment from the ISDs to assume about 2/3 of the cost of the career awareness materials in year five, with the prospect of total assumption the following year
- Continuing the financial support of the City/County for STC in 2001-2002
- Continuing the City/County financial support of Construction Gateway and the Community Technical Training Centers
- Continuing to rely on Tech Prep for the curriculum content of career concentrations and the articulation process

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[17] *Texas School-to-Careers Substate Implementation Application for Year Five* submitted by CAECP.

- Receiving funding from the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce and employers for an increasing portion of the CATF's budget

Several aspects of STC in Travis County already exhibit financial sustainability. The IACP Bridge program is likely to become a permanent part of the AISD college and career-counseling program. The CAECP contributed about 15% (@$12,000) of the funding for the 2000-2001 program with the remaining 85% coming from employers, foundations and Junior Achievement. The annual career fair is more than self sustaining, raising nearly $100,000 from exhibitor fees and sponsorships; excess revenues support other events. Dell Computers, perceiving the teachers to be assets, is reportedly willing to pay 100% of the stipend amount ($3000) for summer educator internships with the firm in 2002.

The broad level of engagement that sustaining and expanding these funding streams requires may be orchestrated by the Youth Activities Committee as it matures and extends its reach across the array of actors, entities and programs dedicated to the provision of youth opportunities and successful outcomes. In Year Four, the CAECP STC grant of $291, 302 leveraged or coordinated activities with an additional $2,129,193, excluding the bulk of the WIA Youth funds that were allocated to CAWDB.[18]

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[18] *Texas School-to-Careers Matrix 7:01 H1*; January-June 2001, submitted by CAECP.

III. Continuing Challenges and Recommendations

Despite its many achievements, School-to-Career objectives that the CAECP has pursued for the last several years have face several overriding challenges that have only slightly, if at all, diminished. Local ISDs, CATF and the Youth Activities Committee/WIA that may plan, direct or deliver future STC activities will continue to confront these contextual and operational challenges. They will also seek innovative practices and policies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their efforts. This last section revisits a few primary challenges and offers several recommendations for sustaining and improving the livelihood prospects of the emerging workforce through STC activities.

Challenges

The future responsibility for STC efforts in central Texas will reside with local ISDs, CATF, the Youth Activities Committee and their collaborators, including CATPC, postsecondary institutions, government entities and other private sector employers and associations—the same interests brought to the table through the efforts of the Partnership. The continuing challenges that they must address include:

- **Tensions between academic core classes and career and technology education classes.** The residual vocational education vs. academic tracking mentality and its parallel—the tracking of college-bound and non-college-bound students—persists in among many ISDs, administrators, instructors, parents and students in Central Texas. The state recommended curriculum for high schools might result in lower career and technology classes and pathways.

- **Recruitment and retention of certified, skilled instructors.** The challenge of attracting and retaining qualified teachers in a tight labor may have mitigated somewhat with the economic slump. The fact remains that salaries of certified instructors are still non-competitive with private sector rates.

- **Weak student proficiencies in math and science**. The Partnership and its collaborators have consistently indicated that the prominent challenge to the future success of many students in the current economy is their poor performance in science and math.

- **Inadequate performance management and measurement systems.** Data concerning both participation in and outcomes from STC activities and services remain sketchy or altogether lacking at the local, state and national level. After nearly five years, data for basic process measures is questionable and no revealing student, educator or employer outcome measures exist.

- **Regional and systemic structures and practices for youth development.** Texas needs a "magna carta" for youth, a regionwide core commitment to a common vision regarding education and career prospects for all youth. The present operational

service areas of the multiple STC stakeholders in central Texas are a hodgepodge of overlapping, bordering and occasionally conforming spatial arrangements.[19] Reasonably effective systemic, regional coordination and collaboration is hampered by time, distance, resources, bureaucratic "turf" and other local preference and control issues. Whether these can be overcome to maximize operational efficiencies has not been revealed to date regarding STC. Incipient regional and systemic achievements can be broadly reinforced by stakeholder commitment to the education and skills needs of the emerging workforce, to the value of enhanced livelihood opportunities for youth and to mutually reinforcing support for parallel initiatives.

Recommendations

A fundamental recommendation is that an entity, such as the Youth Activity Committee, should continue the Partnership's planning, coordination and support functions when the STC grant officially expires. Under that simple recommendation, several more specific recommendations are offered for the Partnership's consideration during the remaining months of federal STC funding and, subsequently, for the consideration of the entity that replaces it.

- **Continue to challenge the divide between academic core/college orientations and career and technology tracking.**

The Partnership has promoted applied learning opportunities in the work place and the classroom. Such project-based learning negotiates the divide between academic and vocational tracking. Fundamentally, STC provides an experiential basis for life long learning, a necessary adaptive skill in the modern workforce.

Additionally, as earlier CAECP assessments have indicated, technical skill training in career concentrations does not preclude college participation and can provide a skills safety net for the sixty or seventy percent of all college students who never complete their degree.

School districts could help by reducing distinctions between academic core faculty and career and technology faculty. By making summer internships available to both academic and career and technology teachers, the Partnership, CATF and CATPC have created a basis for linking work, academic proficiencies and technology across curricula. Institutes and Academies within schools are another promising vehicle for reducing the gap.

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[19] CATF and CATPC serve Travis and the surrounding counties. CAECP and CAWDB serve the City of Austin and Travis County. The Rural Capital Workforce Development Board and the Rural Capital STC Partnership serve 13 counties surrounding Travis. Seven ISDs serve Travis County; two of these also serve bordering counties. Industry and population density varies considerably across the regional labor market, which also spans these, multiple jurisdictions. Settlements include a very large city, small towns and rural areas.

- **Continue to promote the development of performance management and measurement system to monitor student participation in career pathways and track outcomes.**

The Partnership has recognized the importance of comprehensive performance measurement and management approaches since its inception. The Partnership should develop and clearly articulate an accountability strategy for measuring and managing performance for continuous improvement of STC activities and services. It could work with its local partners, its colleagues in workforce boards around the state, and key state officials to implement it.

The TWC planning and reporting matrix has provided a range of process measures for continuous improvement and performance measurement regarding key annual objectives, but this is an initial step only. Reliable data is not yet widely available regarding many processes such as pathways enrollment and articulated credits earned. Nor are data and measures yet available regarding key STC outcomes regarding high school graduation, drop-out prevention, continuing postsecondary education, employment patterns and earnings.[20]

The Partnership should seek state level support for addressing performance management and measurement needs. TWIST should be explored regarding whether WIA Youth data could be supplemented with additional individual student identification, activity and outcome codes relevant to STC objectives. Statewide, local partnerships could secure assistance from Career Development Resources (CDR), formerly known as the State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, which has considerable expertise with student education, occupation and employment data analysis, to develop outcome measurement capacity. CDR has extracted data elements from the automated databases of several state agencies, including the Texas Workforce Commission, the Texas Education Agency, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, as well as Unemployment Insurance files and other administrative data sets. Many of these tasks could be supported by a reliable university-based research center with knowledge of performance measures and familiarity with multiple, large data sets.

- **Expand professional development opportunities for educators and measure results**

The Partnership and CATF have worked with local employers to support summer educator internships, short-term workshops and seminars. They should continue to do so, but could improve the process by collecting more and better information about the benefit of these experiences in terms of curriculum development and student learning.

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[20] Austin ISD has proposed several measures for its School-to-Career program, some of which address the progress of Career and Technology Education students.

Additionally, while most educators appreciate these activities and recommend them to their peers,[21] the number of participants is actually only a small share of the teaching population in central Texas. On top of the prevailing funding issues, time constraints, travel distances, and conflicts with teaching and other responsibilities discourage more broad based participation. Moreover, in the former "hot" labor market, some school administrators feared that industry-led professional development could serve as a siphon to draw teachers out of the classroom and into higher paying jobs.

Although the latter fear is greatly reduced and placement opportunities are down because of the economy, STC policy might be more proactive regarding increasing opportunities and participation rates. The Partnership and CATF might think in terms of mileage reimbursements, increased stipends, continuous education credit, certification and other incentives for educators. For employers, STC could possibly provide more and better public relations exposure, particularly for small and medium size firms participating in the industry clusters.[22]

- **Continue employer engagement strategies and work with business to document results**

The industry sector committees have shown to be an effective means for involving employers and educators in STC activities, and CATF plans to continue deepening and expanding its sector intermediary approach. CATF could take a more active role in the more dynamic sectors to monitor the types of STC participation and their outcomes for business. For example, the Year Three assessment reported some initial indications of enhanced productivity for automotive technology and electrical apprenticeships that might provide a basis for a developing a more reliable measure of return-on-investment (ROI) for employers. Again, documentation of valuable results could be an excellent means to strengthen public and private commitment to STC.

- **Market accomplishments and outcomes as the data become available.**

The Partnership should continue to communicate positive process measures like levels of student, educator and employer participation as well as studies regarding grade improvements, high school completion and college enrollment reported elsewhere until reliable local data becomes available.[23] Validated local outcomes for these latter outcomes, as well as the benefits that accrue to educators (professional development, project-based learning plans, enhanced knowledge workplace culture, skills and

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[21] O'Shea, Dan. 2001. *High Tech Educator Network Evaluation.* (Austin: CATF).

[22] As mentioned earlier, CATF and CAECP have sucessfully marketed employer participation in higher profie events like t5he career fair, work summit and well-funded projects like Destination Digital.

[23] U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor, *Implementation of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act: Joint Report to Congress* (Washington, D.C.: School-to-Work Office, 1999).

behavioral expectations, etc.) and employers (skilled employees, increased productivity, reduced turnover, etc.) will be outstanding marketing assets.

- **Expand and improve the student summer internship program distinguishing between quality work-based learning experiences and summer jobs.**

The Partnership has developed a model for quality internships that included pre-requisite course-work, enrollment in a career concentration, parental approval, a summer learning plan, mentorship and a post-experience evaluation. In past years, many internships also had a for-credit component. Over the years, hundreds of students have participated in these quality work-based experiences. Additionally, the career fair and other activities have helped to identify employment opportunities and place thousands of students in summer jobs.

All three levels of work yield experiential and income benefits. Nevertheless, they are qualitatively very distinct and future local STC efforts should very consciously reinforce these distinctions. Both CATF and Austin ISD plan to do so by concentrating more intense for-credit and high quality internships on tighter groups of targeted students, rather than marketing across the entire student population. Austin ISD already has for-credit internships arranged for students in the Hospitality Pathway for the forthcoming summer. This approach has the further benefit of providing an accessible sample set of students to follow and collect data regarding the outcomes of their STC participation.

The for-credit component has been difficult and controversial over the years. Intermittently assailed by regional fragmentation of ISDs and STC efforts, in Year Four it was labeled by some as very cost ineffective and suffered other constraints such as lack of student interest. If ISDs and CATF lack the resources to administer and provide oversight to for credit internships for which students have little interest, perhaps they should consider dropping this component. For the present the targeted student and industry sector approach is promising.

- **Continue to promote strategies that help school districts recruit and retain certified, skilled instructors.**

CATF and the Partnership have pursued an industry-led approach to STC. As part of its education agenda to improve math and science knowledge, integrate curricula with project-based learning, and better prepare students for advanced education and the workplace, STC should invigorate its concern for the issue of economic viability for teachers. Their salaries still compare unfavorably with private sector opportunities, even in today's flat labor market.

The Partnership has touched lightly on this issue buy providing financial and educational incentives such as paid summer internships and professional development. The employer representatives involved with STC could deepen this effort by at least keeping support for several options on the table. In addition to across the board raises for educators, other

more incremental steps include recruitment/signing bonuses, weighted consideration for merit increases, and extended contract days. Financing these is the challenge.

- **The Partnership should act as a catalyst for a strong and active WIA Youth Advisory Council as a basis of improving youth services, and identifying and securing diversified and stable funding to continue supporting STC activities.**

The Youth Activities Committee of the Partnership could continue its planning, coordination and support functions to develop comprehensive, coordinated opportunities for youth that span schools, workplaces and postsecondary institutions. An aggressive and progressive Council can serve as a platform to increase awareness of the education and career challenges face by today's youth and successful paths to address them, to leverage funds, to enhance collaboration and to set policies aimed at continuously improving youth education and career prospects.

Through the Youth Council, goals and objectives of STC could be institutionalized as important youth-oriented components of a comprehensive workforce development system. The Council can continue the regional collaborative approach fostered and practiced by the Partnership, as well as its support for students, dropouts and at-risk students. The Council as part of the business majority local Workforce Board could complement the sector intermediary approach of CATF, and expand its ability to coordinate activities with others active in the regional labor market, including, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, the Capital Area Tech Prep Consortium, the Rural Capital Area Workforce Development Board, and the City of Austin Workforce Development Coordinators Office, as well as almost all of the Independent School Districts in central Texas.

The Council may also be well positioned to align additional federal resources for disadvantaged and at-risk youth, as well as state and local resources for summer employment, juvenile justice and special projects (e.g., Capital Idea, a community-based initiative that provides career advancement opportunities for low-income families in Austin). The Council could receive foundation and private support for its activities as well.

- **Secure State funding for local planning, coordination and support capacity at the local level.**

The Austin area Youth Activities Committee might take a leadership role in acquiring State revenue support for all Boards to continue the key STC functions previously supported by federal funds. During the 77th State Legislative session, the *21st Century Technology College and Careers Act* had bipartisan support in the Senate and House, but failed to get Governor Perry's support and died on the last day of the session. The bill contained a mechanism to redirect state funds continue funding existing partnerships During the next session (January 2003) WIA Youth Advisory Committees of the 28 local workforce boards could work with the Workforce Leadership of Texas (a membership group comprised of Board Chairs and Directors) to resurrect state legislation.

Final Observations

The Capital Area Education and Career Partnership has brought together schools, employers, government and community leaders for nearly five years to collectively help youth improve their chances of a secure and satisfying future. Real progress has been made both in the range and quality of activities and services supported, as well as the level of participation by students, educators, and business. Federal funding for the Partnership will end September 1, 2002. The basic collaborators with vested interest in the sustainability of a regional systemic approach will likely continue these efforts. The likelihood of their overall success will benefit to the extent that an entity provides the planning coordination and support functions currently formed by the Partnership.

Attachment A

Capital Area Education and Career Partnership (CAECP)
Year Four Assessment
Contact/Interview List

CAECP Evaluation
Contact/Interview List

Bob Rutishauser, Director, CAECP. Rnd. 1, 2
John Fitzpatrick, Executive Director, CATF. (Also, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce-GACC) Rnd. 1
Rip Rowan, Manager of Workforce and Professional Development, CATF. Rnd. 1, 2
Carissa Baldwin, Senior Cluster Director, CATF 2
Jim McClure, HTEN, Professional Development Coordinator, CATF. Rnd. 1, 2
Heath Hignite, Semiconductor Cluster Director, CATF. Rnd 2
Mary Dodd, Senior Coordinator, CATF (Health Sciences Liaison). Rnd. 1
Tom Serafin, Program Coordinator – Construction Gateway, CATF. Rnd. 1
Teresa Van Deusen, Industry Liaison. CATF (Automotive and Construction Industries Liaison). Rnd. 1
Louis Malfaro, Co-President, Education Austin. Rnd. 1
Gilbert Ferrales, Training Director, IBEW/Austin Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee for the Electric Industry. Rnd. 1, 2
Julian Serda, Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) Technical Training. Rnd. 2 (HTEN)
Danyelle Cavaness-Weatherford, Apple Education. Rnd. 2 (HTEN)
Dr. Floyd Bevers, Career & Technology Director, Del Valle ISD. Rnd. 1
Reece Blinco, Career & Technology Director, Del Valle ISD. Rnd. 2
Gary Madsen, Director, Career & Technology Education, Round Rock ISD. Rnd 1
Gerry Elmore, Career and Technology Coordinator/Career Counselor, Manor ISD. Rnd. 1,2
Dr. Joy McLarty, Deputy Superintendent for Accountability and Information Systems, Austin ISD. Rnd. 2
Jerome Hurt, Director, School-to-Career, Austin ISD. Rnd. 1
Pat Bell, Career Specialist, School-to-Career, Austin ISD. Rnd. 1
Randy Strickland, Coordinator of Special Areas, Pflugerville ISD. Rnd. 1
Clyde Read, Instructor, Electronics/ Principles of Technology, John B. Connally High School/ Pflugerville ISD. Rnd. 1

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